

CERTIFICATION NEWSLETTER

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SPRING 2003

The Office of Teacher Preparation, Certification, and Professional Development will be issuing this newsletter periodically to keep you informed on a variety of initiatives under way that may be of interest to you. Should you have any questions, please contact the office at 401-222-4600 exts. 2256, 2257, 2258, and 2260; ITTY 800-745-5555; Voice 800-745-6575. The web site can be accessed through www.ridoe.net.

NEW TESTING REQUIREMENTS FOR TEACHER CERTIFICATION ENACTED

On March 27, 2003 the Board of Regents adopted new testing requirements for certification as early childhood, elementary, early childhood special, and elementary special education teachers. The provisions of the federal "No Child Left Behind" law necessitate this action. Individuals seeking the certificates mentioned must take the following two tests and achieve the scores noted:

Elementary Education Content Knowledge Test: 145

Elementary Education Content Area Exercises Test: 148

The Educational Testing Service administers these two tests. www.ets.org/praxis, 609-771-7395

The Board of Regents is still in the process of finalizing an implementation date for these two new tests. On May 22, 2003, the Board of Regents agreed to accept a passing score on the Principles of Learning and Teaching Test as a substitute for successful completion of the Elementary Education Content Area Exercises, and, further that, an individual with a passing score on the PLT need successfully complete only the Elementary Education Content Knowledge Test to meet the "highly qualified" testing requirement. A special administration of the new tests will be held in Rhode Island on Saturday August 9. Information may be obtained through ETS at the web-site noted.

NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR BILINGUAL SPANISH ENDORSEMENT ENACTED

On March 27, 2003 the Board of Regents enacted new regulations for the issuance of a bilingual Spanish endorsement. Individuals seeking this particular endorsement must take the following **two** tests and achieve the noted cut-off scores:

Spanish Content Knowledge Test: 156

Spanish Productive Language Skills Test: 174

These two tests are administered by the Educational Testing Service, www.ets.org/praxis, 609-771-7395.

RHODE ISLAND CERTIFICATION AND ADVISORY BOARD

Members of the CPAB have recommended that the Board of Regents:

- Adopt and implement a non-traditional teacher certification program and
- Adopt and implement performance Program Approval Standards for teacher educator programs.

TEACHER ASSISTANTS

Federal requirements for Teacher Assistants (TA) qualifications as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) apply to the following:

- TAs with instructional duties paid through Title I funds;
- For school-wide Title I projects, all TAs with instructional duties without regard to funding source for those positions and
- All TAs working with students with disabilities with instructional duties without regard to funding sources for those positions

State legislation is currently pending to extend these requirements to all instructional TAs to establish a uniform standard to (1) support increased quality instruction for all students, (2) offer TAs more flexibility in choice job assignments and (3) provide school administrators more flexibility in TA assignments.

CERTIFICATION NEWSLETTER

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Requirements are that TAs shall have:

- Completed at least two (2) years study (at least 48 semester hours) at a higher education institution; OR
- Obtained as associate or higher degree; OR
- Met a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate, through a formal state or local academic assessment, the knowledge and ability to assist in instructing, reading, writing and mathematics or readiness skills in these areas. Rhode Island is using the ParaPro Assessment with a passing score of 461.

In addition, all TAs must meet existing state requirements among which is the provision for completion of a RIDE approved TA Training Program for TAs hired after January 1, 1999. School districts have the obligation to identify job specific competencies needed for teacher assistant assignments and articulate these in job descriptions. Pursuant to RI General Laws 16-11.2, school districts are to provide TAs with ongoing professional development related to those job specific duties and the policies and procedures governing those duties, including maintaining records on TAs' completion of training for the work assignment and continuing education and relevant coursework. School districts must also include TAs in a meaningful way in plans related to Rhode Island's Comprehensive Education Strategy, including school improvement plans and professional development plans.

More information may be obtained at www.ritap.org. and www.ridoe.net.

MENTORING

"There is nothing more important than to develop the potential of people. Thus, mentors must be more than just buddies; they must be trained to bring out the best in people." (Breux and Wong)

The Mentor Network continues to meet on a monthly basis. These sessions are used to share different aspects of mentor programs that are currently in existence in districts throughout the state.

This winter the Rhode Island Teaching and Learning Center and the Rhode Island Department of Education sponsored a joint training session. "*Mentoring Matters: A Practical Guide to Learning-Focused Relationships*" featuring Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman from Mira Via, LLC was held on December 12 and 13, 2002, February 5, 2003 and March 31, 2003. Mentor coordinators, mentor facilitators, curriculum specialists, instructional coaches and administrators were invited. Training outcomes were:

- To clarify our roles, responsibilities and intentions as growth agents
- To apply strategies, templates and tools for planning, reflecting and problem solving; both in one-to-one and group settings
- To develop verbal and non-verbal skills to support consulting, collaboration and coaching work with colleagues.
- To explore methods for providing feedback to improve instructional decision-making

This spring the Rhode Island Department of Education and the Rhode Island Teaching and Learning Center sponsored a joint training. "*Peer Coaching Training*" featuring Pam Robbins was held on April 23-24, 2003 and May 8-9, 2003. Mentor coordinator, mentor facilitators, curriculum specialists, instructional coaches, faculty from higher education, and administrators were invited. The focus of the training was:

- Examine critical ingredients of a peer-coaching program
- Analyze the impact of school culture on peer interactions
- Develop guidelines for peer-coaching practices
- Practice tools to facilitate dialogue about literacy lessons, student progress and products
- Cite keys to successful implementation
- Reflect upon personal next steps

CERTIFICATION NEWSLETTER

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DISTRICT INPUT:

East Greenwich:

Mentor/Mentee comments:

Mentees:

- “My mentor has been an invaluable resource during my transition year.”
- “I would prefer someone on my own professional category...”

Mentors:

- “I am thoroughly enjoying being a mentor. It has been a benefit too, for me, to mentor a very strong mentee.”
- “It would make sense to have a relationship with similar professional backgrounds.”
- “The mentoring relationship is a positive one. I wish I had a mentor when I was a new teacher.”
However, I would feel far more comfortable mentoring someone in my own department.”

Submitted by Christine D’Acchioli and Lois Chavez

Lincoln:

“We are now in the third year of a three-year mentoring program. Each year or phase of mentoring has a different focus. The first year, mentors/mentees work on the strategies and tools necessary to make their year, as well as their students’ year successful, productive and rewarding. Year two focuses on more defined ways of refining teaching strategies and reflecting on teaching practice. In year three, the focus has been on peer coaching, a tool that they will be able to carry with them and use throughout their teaching career. It is so rewarding to work with teachers over the three years. You get to see them grow and become more confident in their abilities.”

Submitted by Amy DelFarno, Fred Hoppe and Hilda Potrzeba

North Kingstown:

“The mentoring program in North Kingstown held a Level III training session for thirteen mentors in February. The focus for the training was the exploration of strategies for assessment of student work. Mentors engaged in evaluating the effectiveness of the assessment samples. They discussed the methods by which they could communicate with their mentees about the issue of the preparation and purpose for assessment. Besides the information shared, there was an opportunity to interact with other mentors, renew relationships, share good food and win great prizes. Last words heard before the closing of the final session: See you at Level IV training...”

Submitted by Ann Lavoie

Pawtucket:

“As new coordinators, we have focused our attention on getting organized. In order to get information out in an efficient way, we decided to create our own website. It includes the program’s history, requirements, contact information, etc. Mentors and mentees can also download and print out a log booklet if they misplace theirs. One area that has become a hit is the picture we post following our get-togethers! It is a work in progress, but coming along. “(http://www.psdri.net/WEBS/mentor_program/index.html)

Submitted by Ellen Downing and Lynn Cristino

CERTIFICATION NEWSLETTER

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Westerly

“Our mentoring program is in its second year. We meet with mentors/mentees on a monthly basis and focus on various topics. A special activity that we did was a rewrite of *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown.

- *The Important Thing About Mentoring: The Important Book*, a children’s book by Margaret Wise Brown, is read to the mentors/mentees. Then they work together to rewrite the story, relating it to mentoring.

Here’s an example:

- The important thing about mentoring is partnership.
- It’s like a steering wheel, a compass, a sibling a confidant. You grow and learn and share and support. You overcome and you celebrate. It isn’t predictable or static. It bends and changes every day.
- But the important thing about mentoring is partnership”

Submitted by Melissa Denton

IPLAN

Our highly successful pilot project that enables Rhode Island educators to re-certify by developing and implementing an individual professional development plan was initiated in 1997. Currently 431 teachers and administrators in 34 school districts are active I-Planners.

For the past several months “Team I-Plan”, which is composed of Department staff, I-Plan and Mentor Fellows as well as representatives from school districts, has worked to design a statewide implementation for I-Plan. We anticipate that by the 2008-09 all Rhode Island educators will be re-certified through the I-Plan process. The phase-in process for teachers holding provisional certification is scheduled to begin this fall with an orientation to I-Plan and training sessions for local school districts.

The statewide I-Plan will retain the features that make the pilot I-Plan so successful. However, the new design will create a comprehensive program by linking mentoring and I-Plan at both the district and state level to insure that all educators have the training and support to create and implement their plans. To support this effort, the Department is currently soliciting applications for Teacher Quality Fellows who have knowledge of both I-Plan and Mentoring programs.

Finally, our two I-Plan Fellows, Lucille Andolfo and Karen Lepore, whose expertise and dedication have guided and shaped the I-Plan over the pilot phase will leave the Department at the end of this school year to pursue other professional endeavors. We thank them for everything that they have created in the name of I-Plan. We wish them good luck!

RHODE ISLAND NATIONAL BOARD INITIATIVE

The total number of Rhode Island National Board Certified Teachers now exceeds 100, or 1% of the total number of practicing public school teachers in Rhode Island. Additionally, there are over 50 new candidates that began the process of National Board Certification in September 2002, another 14 recently began the process, and over 25 advanced candidates (those that are redoing one or more entries) are continuing the process. Since funding has been depleted, we are unable to support additional interested teachers until new funds can be procured. Teachers are now able to begin certification at any point during the year. Consequently, the Rhode Island Teaching and Learning Center (RITLC) will accept subsidy applications on a year-round basis. Please call the center (822-9449) or send an email (ritlc@ride.ri.net) for more information.

Besides seeking national certification, Rhode Island teachers are using National Board standards to reflect on their work and set goals for future professional development. The Rhode Island Teaching and Learning Center uses these standards to make choices about professional development offerings. For more

CERTIFICATION NEWSLETTER

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

information about these standards or about National Board certification, check out their website (www.nbpts.org) .

RHODE ISLAND TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER OFFERINGS

Most offerings at the RITLC are coming to a close at the school year ends. Of particular note, approximately 100 Rhode Island teachers were trained in backward curriculum design, over 50 teachers participated in National Board courses, and numerous teachers participated in workshops focused on family and community engagement, peer coaching, learning-centered mentoring, lesson study, action research, and school improvement planning. Coaches in seven Rhode Island school districts participated in the RITLC's coach network.

This summer, the RITLC is hosting the Rhode Island Cooperating/Mentor Teacher Level III Institute, which will focus on essential components of assessments. Irv Richardson and Janice Vuolo will facilitate the institute, to be held on August 6-8. For more information about this opportunity, contact the RITLC at 822-9449 or email at ritlc@ride.ri.net.

REQUIREMENTS FOR RENEWAL OF CERTIFICATES

Our office frequently receives inquiries regarding the need to obtain a master degree. The most common misunderstanding is that a master degree must be completed within five years of obtaining provisional certification. Under regulations in effect since the mid 1980s, a master degree is **not** required to maintain a teaching certificate. Renewal of certificates requires completing a specified number of credits within a defined time frame. Individuals **may** engage in the pursuit of an advanced degree to fulfill this requirement but are not required to do so.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: My provisional certificate will be expiring soon. I have not used it in Rhode Island public schools. Do I still need to complete six (6) credits?

A: Yes! Regulations mandate completion of six credits within the three years of provisional certification whether or not you use your certificate in Rhode Island public schools.

Q: My five-year professional certificate will be expiring soon. I have not used (or used for only a few years) this certificate in Rhode Island public schools. Do I need to fulfill the nine (9)-credit requirement for renewal?

A: No! If you have not used your five-year professional certificate at all in Rhode Island public schools, you do not need to complete the nine (9)-credit requirement. If you have used the certificate for a portion of the allotted time and have not completed the nine (9) credits, the certificate will be renewed for the balance of the unused time. When the remaining time is used you will need to submit the nine (9) credits for renewal. **HOWEVER IF YOU HAVE USED YOUR FIVE-YEAR PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE IN RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR THE FULL FIVE YEARS YOU MUST SUBMIT THE NINE (9) CREDITS FOR RENEWAL.**

Q: I am interested in completing in-service credits. How are they calculated?

A: In-service credits are calculated on the basis of contact hours. Fifteen (15) contact hours equals one (1) in-service credit. Frequently there is some confusion in the manner in which in-service professional development activities are reported. Some agencies use "CEUs" and others use professional development points (PDPs). These are not acceptable forms of documentation for certification purposes. All professional development activities must provide verification of contact hours. Should you have any questions about acceptable in-service activities and credit(s) please contact the Office of Teacher Certification **before** you engage in any program.

The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, or disability.